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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS MANAGUA 001499

SIPDIS

PASS TO USDA/APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETTC](#) [EAGR](#) [NU](#)

SUBJECT: NICARAGUA RESTORES MARKET ACCESS TO U.S. CATTLE,
BUT NOT TO BEEF

¶1. (U) On December 9, 2008, representatives of Nicaragua's Ministry of Agriculture (MAGFOR) informed post's USDA rep that Nicaragua had overturned its 2004 ban on the importation of U.S. live cattle, sheep and goats, consistent with the 2007 recommendation of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). According to the Ministerial Agreement received by USDA, Nicaragua now permits the importation of live cattle, sheep and goats from countries, including the U.S., that meet OIE conditions in regard to controlling the risk for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also known as "mad cow" disease. The Ministerial Agreement, however, only permits the importation of live cattle, sheep and goats from qualified countries. It does not specify nor permit the importation of beef and beef products, even though OIE standards regarding BSE are the same for beef and beef products as for live animals.

¶2. (U) In 2007, more than three years after the first case of BSE in the U.S. prompted Central American countries to halt the importation of U.S. cattle and beef, the OIE unanimously adopted a recommendation that the United States be recognized as having "controlled" risk status for BSE. The OIE controlled risk classification provided an objective international recognition that the control measures in place in the U.S. effectively manage any BSE risk.

¶3. (U) The Ministerial Agreement, which is dated September 2008, was delivered to USDA rep at post on December 9. Post's USDA rep contacted MAGFOR's Chief of Animal Health Mauricio Pichardo to further inquire about the Agreement. Pichardo verified that the Agreement referred only to cattle, sheep and goats and not to beef, and he promised to consult the Ministry's legal office to determine the reason why Nicaragua continues to ban the importation of U.S. beef and beef products.

¶4. (U) Comment: It is possible that MAGFOR'S omission of beef is unintentional. Post is hopeful that the Nicaraguan market will be fully opened to beef and beef products within a short period of time. USDA has been working for more than 18 months to persuade Nicaragua to open its market to U.S. cattle and beef. The December 2003 discovery of BSE in the U.S. prompted all Central American countries to take steps to close their markets to these products. In May of 2007, the OIE's recommendation that the U.S. be classified as "controlled risk" for BSE provided strong support that U.S. regulatory controls were effective and U.S. cattle and cattle products could be safely traded internationally. Since the OIE announcement, Nicaragua had been the only Central American country to resist opening its market to U.S. cattle and beef.
CALLAHAN